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Reds say POW's get spy kits

Peking (AP)—American anti-war activists, in Peking with three prisoners of war released by North Vietnam, disclosed yesterday a charge by Hanoi that United States packages mailed to POW's have contained spying devices, rigged into such things as cans of milk.

The Pentagon called the charge ridiculous.

The charge was first made on the American delegation's second day in Hanoi September 17. Hoang Tong, editor of the official Communist party newspaper, *Nhan Dan*, said his government was "extremely upset by electronic devices hidden in packages regularly sent to prisoners."

The activist delegation—Cora Weiss, David Dellinger, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin and Richard Falk—who went to Hanoi to get the prisoners, said they asked for evidence to prove the charge. This evidence, they assert, was displayed Monday shortly before the group left for Peking and thence Moscow en route to the United States.

As described by the delegation, the nearest thing to an "electronic device" seemed to be material for a radio receiver.

A correspondent accompanying the group did not see the display. He had attended various meetings with the three released POW's and seven other POW's who were brought forward for interviews Monday, but was not advised that the alleged espionage materials were to be shown.

Later Mrs. Weiss told of the display and passed on photographs which she said the North Vietnamese had described as showing packages and contents sent to American prisoners.

"Too ridiculous"

A Pentagon spokesman, Maj. Gen. Daniel James, said when asked to comment in Washington: "The charges are too ridiculous to dignify by trying to address them in detail. I know of no instance of such actions taking place, and I think it is just another of the propaganda web that Hanoi is spinning to obscure the real facts concerning her intransigent position in refusing to negotiate meaningfully for our prisoners of war."

From the pictures could be discerned three names of alleged recipients—Charles R. Tyler, of Mesa, Ariz.; Edward A. Brudno, of Harrison, N.J., and William Robinson, of Robersonville, N.C.

Mrs. Weiss's group told of the following:

1. An extra-large tube of Colgate toothpaste which when squeezed revealed what Hanoi said was a receiving apparatus with a battery compartment and an earpiece.
2. Inside a candy bar were two pieces of cellulose paper, each 2 by 3 inches, with instructions for writing messages that would not be detectable. The special paper was to be folded so that it made a sharp edge, and the secret message was to be written with this edge, the North Vietnamese said. Then, by using a code word in a normal letter, the prisoner would tell the person receiving his letter that there was a special message to be found by special processing of the paper.
3. A peanut shell that had been hollowed out and contained a message, and also cans of milk and instant coffee which Hanoi said also had contained messages.

4. A toy hippopotamus about 1½ inches long, sealed, which when opened showed an enclosure with raised writing on one side reading "see secret hiding place" and on the other, "hold together, stand up."

5. A wrapped bar of soap that had been cut in half, each half gouged out and containing plastic bags full of capsules said by the North Vietnamese to be used for secret writing.

One small cellulose sheet was said to have asked for verification of the deaths of five American fliers, as announced by the North Vietnamese, and information about any others known to be dead.

The same sheet asked recipients to provide any information about prisoners captured anywhere in Indochina. The instructions with this were said to read:

"Identify X reference word X provide details on letter writing procedure X. Are you under constant observation by guards or interrogators while writing home queries? Are some POW's not allowed to write? Do you get to keep your letters from home? Do POW's have access to or control of communications receivers? What frequencies and times can you receive queries? If not available, what critical parts are needed to build a receiver? How effective is covert POW communications?"